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BACHELOR THESIS

Social class in E.M. Forster's *Howards End* and Zadie Smith's *On Beauty*

Společenská třída v románech *Rodinné sídlo* E.M. Forstera a *O Kráse*
Zadie Smith

Štěpánka Lacková

Supervisor: PhDr. Tereza Topolovská, PhD.

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis, “Social Class in E.M. Forster’s *Howards End* and Zadie Smith’s *On Beauty*” is of my own creation, and that any work adopted from other sources is appropriately cited and referenced as such. I further declare that this thesis was not submitted to obtain another academic title.

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Signature

Prague, 22nd of July 2020

Abstract

This bachelor thesis compares and contrasts the depiction of social class in E.M. Forster's *Howards End* and Zadie Smith's *On Beauty*. The theoretical part introduces the concept of social class as well as its portrayal in Edwardian literature and in contemporary British literature and also in the works of E.M. Forster and Zadie Smith. Due to the apparent connection between the two texts, an overview of intertextuality and its functioning in literature is added to the theoretical part. The practical part of the paper interprets *On Beauty* as a pastiche of *Howards End* but mainly provides the analysis of the two novels in terms of their view of social stratification, in particular the differences between upper middle class and working class.

Key words:

Howards End, *On Beauty*, E.M. Forster, Zadie Smith, social class, middle class, working class, intertextuality

Abstrakt

Tato bakalářská práce porovnává přístupy k vyobrazení společenské třídy v knihách *Rodinné sídlo* E.M. Forstera a *O kráse* Zadie Smith. Teoretická část práce představí koncept společenské třídy a jeho zobrazení v eduardovské literatuře a v současné britské literatuře a také v dílech daných autorů. Vzhledem k patrnému propojení daných knih, bude v teoretické části vysvětlen pojem intertextuality a jeho funkce v literatuře. Praktická část se věnuje interpretaci knihy *O kráse* jako pastiš na knihu *Rodinné sídlo*, ale primárně se zabývá analýzou daných knih z hlediska jejich chápání společenské třídy, především pak rozdílů mezi střední třídou a dělnickou třídou.

Klíčová slova

Rodinné sídlo, *O kráse*, E.M. Forster, Zadie Smith, společenská třída, střední třída, dělnická třída, intertextualita

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1. Introduction

Zadie Smith's third novel *On Beauty* (2005) was an anticipated release as after the immense success of her debut novel *White Teeth* (2000) and the not-so-well received second novel *The Autograph Man* (2002), "rumours abounded that she had given up writing fiction" (Bentley 54). These rumours were proven wrong as *On Beauty* received positive reviews and was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 2005 and won the Women's Prize for Fiction in 2006. In this book, Zadie Smith explores both personal and professional relationships in a fictional American college city of Wellington while dealing with subjects such as privilege and race.

Upon reading the novel, it soon becomes clear to the reader that *On Beauty* shares striking similarities with E.M. Forster's renowned novel *Howards End* (1910) in which he depicts "the condition of England" at the beginning of the 20th century. In the acknowledgements in *On Beauty*, Zadie Smith describes her novel as an *homage* to *Howards End* and in an interview with Penguin, she mentions that with this novel she "wanted to pay tribute to the influence [Forster] had on [her] as a teenager" (*On Beauty Reader's Guide*). The similarities are therefore not accidental.

On Beauty parallels *Howards End* in several plot points and readers may also observe certain characters that may be viewed as counterparts. Smith also places her characters into similar social positions as E.M. Forster. John Mullan states in his review of *On Beauty* that the book could be considered an imitation of *Howards End* as he defines imitations as "a rewriting of an original, whose outline you were allowed to keep glimpsing through the new creation". For Smith, however, *Howards End* was, in her own words, "just a little hook to hang a novel on" (*On Beauty Reader's Guide*) and as Stephanie Merritt writes in her review, *On Beauty* is not simply an updated version of

Howards End as the “configurations of relationships are altered, melodrama excised, new themes introduced”. Regardless, the influence of *Howards End* on *On Beauty* is evident in many ways.

In his novel, Forster depicts the social stratification of Edwardian England through a gradually developing relationship between two upper middle-class families – the Schlegels and the Wilcoxes and through their relationship with the working-class Basts. Zadie Smiths sets her story almost a hundred years later after that of Forster’s but she borrows the storyline of characters in different social positions interacting with one another. In *On Beauty*, the upper middle-class families are the Belseys and the Kippes and Carl Thomas stands for the working-class figure. Social class is depicted as a prominent aspect which shapes one’s life experiences and as such the social position of the characters acquires the role of a major theme which significantly affects the plot development and the relationships between the characters.

The primary objective of this thesis is therefore to analyse the theme of social stratification in these two novels, chiefly the representation of the upper middle class, the working class, and the underclass. To understand the phenomenon of social class, the theoretical part of the thesis will provide an explanation of the phenomenon drawing mainly from Anthony Giddens and Paul W. Sutton’s *Sociology* (2017), namely from the chapter “Stratification and social class”. It will also provide a brief description of the social stratification in the respective settings of the two novels, Edwardian England for *Howards End* and the USA and England for *On Beauty*. However, the thesis is concerned with a literary analysis of the social class and because of that, the paper will also look at the portrayal of the theme of social class in the literature of the Edwardian period and subsequently in contemporary British literature using the chapter “Class” from Nick Bentley’s *Contemporary British Fiction* (2018) as the primary source. In the

practical part, I will focus on the similarities and differences between the protagonist families of the upper middle-class standing to see whether their conflicting political views are more important than belonging to a certain social class. I will also look at the ways in which Zadie Smith alters the depiction of the social stratification in comparison to E.M. Forster, mainly via the transposition of the stratification system to an academic setting but also through the addition of the issue of race which will be discussed mainly in relation to the working class.

Taking the parallels between the two novels into consideration, the secondary aim of this paper is to analyse *On Beauty* as a pastiche of *Howards End*. In order to sufficiently understand the interconnection between the two novels, drawing mainly from Allen Graham's monograph *Intertextuality* (2000), the thesis will offer a brief explanation of intertextuality, and its use in literature, focusing on the aforementioned pastiche. The similarities between the two novels, however, will be observed throughout the thesis, focusing on the approaches of the authors to representing the social position of their characters.

2. Theoretical Part

2.1. Social Class

The theme of social class plays a significant role in both books, *Howards End* and *On Beauty*. The term *social class*, however, is not an easy term to define because it is used in a range of disciplines such as sociology, politics, cultural studies, or economics. As a result, any of the given disciplines can define *social class* in its own terms. Because of that, this chapter will focus on defining the term of *social class* in relation to sociology and also on its depiction in literature, specifically in the works of the two authors analysed in this paper, E.M. Forster and Zadie Smith.

Generally speaking, social class denotes “divisions in society” (Day 2). In sociology, these divisions in society are described and analysed in terms of social stratification. Social stratification can be defined as a system of categories of people that are based on a variety of attributes, such as “gender, age, [race], religious affiliation or military rank” (Giddens and Sutton 479). However, most commonly, social stratification is based on one’s material assets. Regardless of the classifying attribute, Giddens and Sutton recognize three main features of every system of social stratification. First of which is the fact that the members of a certain social stratum do not have to “identify or interact” (479) with other members of the same stratum despite being linked by the same social position. Secondly, belonging to a certain social category significantly affects its members’ experiences and prospects in life. The third characteristic of stratification systems is that the boundaries created by the division into categories change in a very slow and gradual process (Giddens and Sutton 479). In other words, belonging to a certain category within a stratification system significantly

influences one's life, for example in terms of their occupation, but it does not create a cohesive group of people that would all share similar opinions or beliefs.

Commonly, four basic types of social stratification systems are recognized, namely slavery, castes, estates, and class (Giddens and Sutton 480). Class system differs in several ways from the other social stratification systems, most significantly by the fact that it is chiefly “economically based” (Giddens and Sutton 484). In other words, one's class membership is dependent mainly on one's “ownership of property and wealth” (Giddens and Sutton 484). The most significant theorist of social class was Karl Marx, a German philosopher, political theorist and sociologist. Marx defined class in regard to economics and he described two social classes, the *bourgeoisie*, a class that owns “the means of production” and the *proletariat*, a class that own “nothing but their labour power, which they [are] obliged to sell in order to survive” (Day 6). For Marx, “the relationship between classes is exploitative” (Giddens and Sutton 486) because the bourgeoisie underpays the proletariat in order to make a profit. As a result, the two classes are in a constant state of social conflict. In hindsight, Marx's theory of social class is considered oversimplified as he divided society only into two groups of people (Giddens and Sutton 487). Nevertheless, his theory remains very influential.

There are several different approaches to explaining the relationship between class and literature. Gary Day mentions several theorists and their understanding of the relationship, for example, Georg Lukács' view that literature “is able to penetrate the surface of society, highlighting hidden connections and identifying underlying trends” or the belief of Luis Althusser that literature “can make us aware of the ideological nature of our conventional conception of reality” and according to Lucien Goldmann, literature is a way of representing “the word-view of a particular group” (Day 1-2).

Literature can, therefore, help readers understand society better in terms of its ideology but it is also a way of representing certain class's views and beliefs.

2.1.1. Social Class in Edwardian England

The term Edwardian England describes a period of British history from 1901 to 1914. The beginning of the era is linked with the death of Queen Victoria and the accession of her son King Edward VII on January 22 1901 and the end of the Edwardian era is marked by the beginning of World War I in 1914 (Nowell-Smith vi). The period of Edwardian England is often depicted as a “long and leisurely afternoon” (Hetttersley i) and described as a time of “gargantuan dinner parties and gorgeous balls in the metropolis, [...] and week-end parties of near-feudal splendour in the country” (Laski 141). However, “the Edwardian period was far from tranquil” (Bradshaw 4) as it was characterized by “growth of socialism” (Day 146) but also by “rising poverty [and] imperial decline” (Peppis 47)

In terms of social stratification, the class system followed that of the preceding Victorian England. Society was divided into three classes, upper class, middle class and lower or working class. However, the class system was not as rigid at the turn of the century as it was during the Victorian period because the late 19th century was, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, a time of social change manifesting in a range of aspects, from education or women's rights to the “appearance of the new unions” (Day 146).

The Edwardian upper class was composed of the wealthiest members of society as well as of those who had a high status in society and along with that, they had the most influence on the political scene (Holland 7). Sally Mitchell describes the upper

class as “a hereditary landowning class, whose income came from the rental of their property” (21). It was the upper class that created the picture of Edwardian England as a time of country houses and never-setting sun as described in the opening paragraph.

In the social hierarchy, the middle class stands between the upper class and the working class. At the beginning of the Edwardian era in 1901 a quarter of the population was middle class (Mitchel 19). It was the most diverse group and according to Laski “there were so many kinds of middle-class [...] life that no general picture can serve” (142) to describe the class as a cohesive group of people. Since the middle class was such a varied category of people, social stratification existed even within the class. The division into the *upper middle class* and the *lower middle class* was based, for example, on “[one’s] income and profession, one’s family background, where one lived and where one was educated” (Holland 9). The upper middle class was composed mainly “of large-scale merchants, manufacturers, and bankers—men whose success was a direct consequence of the Industrial Revolution” (Mitchel 20). The lower middle class consisted of “small shopkeepers and most clerical workers” (Mitchel 20) as well as “commercial travellers, practitioners of some arts or crafts, [...] school-teachers, surveyors [or] small businessmen” (Holland 9).

Members of the working class were characterized by the fact that they earned their money by manual work. (Mitchel 19). During the Edwardian period, as suggested above, the conditions of the working class were changing for the better, mainly due to the emergence of new unions that “campaign[ed] for change on a range of issues from the introduction of eight-hour day to welfare benefits for the unemployed, the sick and the aged” (Day 146). However, the social activism was also characterized by middle-class interference as it was often the members of the upper classes who took it upon themselves to better the social conditions of the poor (Laski 184). As for occupation, the

more fortunate members of the working class were made up of skilled workers, such as “printers, masons, carpenters, bookbinders, expert dressmakers [or] shoemakers” (Mitchel 19). However, Mitchel adds that many of the working-class people lived barely above the poverty line (18). As a result, members of the working class had to be extremely cautious in regard to the consequences of their decisions as “one false move [such as] an unwanted pregnancy [...] could plunge them into poverty” (Holland 9).

2.1.1.1. The Depiction of Social Class in Edwardian Literature

In terms of literature, the late nineteenth century as well as the Edwardian era, were characterized by a rise in interest in the working-class culture (Day 16) due to the fact that the period of Edwardian England, described earlier as a time of luxury and wealth, was also “accompanied by a terror of the increasingly dispossessed working-class” (Batchelor 128). This was reflected in many authors’ works, however, most authors of the time were members of the middle class and, therefore, the depiction of the working class did not come from the working class itself (Batchelor 128). According to Day, the portrayal of the working class was twofold as some authors would consider poverty a consequence of one’s personality or unwillingness to work without taking into consideration the effects of capitalism on the working class (145). The other view of the working class was understanding their members as “the product of [...] their circumstance” (Day 145). With this point, Day mentions and quotes George Gissing’s *The Nether World* (1889) in which Gissing writes that one’s faults are not “characteristics to be condemned [...] but the outcome of cruel conditions” (145).

Many authors also aimed to portray the differences between lower and upper classes in their work. John Batchelor gives H.G. Wells’ *The Time Machine* (1895) as an

example: “Wells identifies with the aristocratic Eloi [...] while the terrifying Morlocks who live on the Eloi’s flesh are the descendants of the industrial proletariat [...] there is no doubt that *The Time Machine* reflects and expresses current middle-class anxiety about the urban poor” (128). According to Batchelor, authors would often use a metaphor of an *abyss* to describe the difference between the rich and the poor and mainly the living conditions of the poor, manifested. for instance, in Jack London’s *The People of the Abyss* (1903) or Arthur Morrison’s *The Hole in the Wall* (1902) (128-9).

A literary movement that partly overlapped with the Edwardian era was Modernism. Modernism was characterized by the authors distancing “themselves from the masses and certain aspects of modernism in cultural terms” (Day 154). Because of that, “the modernists segregated people [...] on the basis of culture rather than economics” (Day 156) but the difference between the rich and the poor as well as wealth remained relevant in their works. In fact, “in a number of modernist novels [...] money was becoming the sole measure of value” (Day 156). This is exemplified, for instance in Ursula’s remark in D.H. Lawrence’s *The Rainbow* (1915): “I hate it, that anybody is my equal who has the same amount of money as I have [...] it is the equality of dirt” (Lawrence quoted in Day 156). This notion is also apparent in E.M. Forster’s *Howards End* which will be discussed later in the paper.

2.1.2. Social Class in Contemporary USA and England

Nowadays, the issue of social stratification is often problematized as the division into classes is not as “clear-cut” (Giddens and Sutton 480) because the division into the upper class, middle class and lower class is no longer sufficient. The scheme is based mainly on occupation and this distinction is no longer possible as “other factors, such as

social attitudes, cultural aspirations and lifestyle, have to be taken into account” (Day 188).

The upper class is no longer derived from the ownership of land or high status in society but rather “from profit-making in global markets” (Giddens and Sutton 494) and includes “owners of substantial enterprises, investors with diversified wealth, heirs to family fortunes, and top executives of major corporations” (Gilbert 232). The fact that it is the wealthiest members of society who have political power in their hands has not changed. Because of the accumulation of wealth into the hands of the upper class, the members of this class hold influence over the lower classes as they can create new work positions and moreover, “they contribute money to political parties, and they own media enterprises that allow them influence over the thinking of other classes” (Gilbert 231).

The middle class is a very diverse group that consists of a “broad spectrum of people working in many different occupations [ranging] from employees of service industries to school teachers and medical professionals” (Giddens and Sutton 498). Due to its broadness, the middle class of the Edwardian era was divided into the upper middle class and the lower middle class and the middle class of contemporary society is divided in a similar manner. In this case, the upper middle class is based on the professionalism of certain occupations and because of that this distinctive group within the middle class is, by some theorists, called the *professional* or *managerial* class (Giddens and Sutton 501). Giddens and Sutton explain how the professional class came into existence on the example of medical professionals.

Three main dimensions of professionalism have enabled [the professional/managerial class] to happen: entry into the profession is restricted to those who meet a strict set of criteria (qualification); professional association, such as the British medical association, monitors and disciplines members'

conduct and performance; and it is generally accepted that only members of the profession are qualified to practise medicine (501).

Other occupations that could be considered representative of the professional class are, for example, journalists, professors or lawyers (Ehrenreich et al.).

Dennis Gilbert describes the members of the middle class who do not qualify for the professional class as people who “have significant skills and perform varied tasks at work, under loose supervision [and] who earn enough to afford comfortable, mainstream lifestyle” (Gilbert 230).

The working class is divided similarly to the middle class into the upper working class and the lower working class. The standard of living of many members of the working class has significantly improved as expressed by “the increased availability of consumer goods [such as cars, televisions, computers] to all classes” (Giddens and Sutton 501). The lifestyle of the lower middle class and the upper working class is therefore very similar and the distinction is generally based on whether the members’ occupation is a white-collar job, for the middle class, or a blue-collar job, for the working class (Gilbert 230).

The lower working class, or in Gilbert’s terminology, the *working poor class* “includes most service workers and the lowest-paid operatives and sales and clerical workers” (235). Gilbert also adds that the jobs occupied by the members of the working poor class are often associated with certain disadvantages which include disagreeable and potentially unsafe work environment, uncertainty in regard to the employment and a lack of work benefits (235). However, it is also important to mention that many members of the working poor class are young people who can move upwards in the social hierarchy by gaining work experience (Gilbert 235).

From the 1980s, “economic recession, de-industrialization and cuts in welfare increased the number of poor in Britain and the United States” (Day 187) which lead to the emergence of the *underclass*, a term not yet acknowledged in the Edwardian period.

Giddens and Sutton describe the underclass as a

segment of the population located at the very bottom of – literally underneath – the class structure. Members of the underclass have significantly lower living standards than the majority and many are among the long-term unemployed or drift in and out of paid work. Some are homeless or have no permanent place in which to live. They may spend long periods of time dependent on state welfare benefits (502).

Giddens and Sutton further explain that the term underclass is often linked with social minorities and is associated with issues of “race, ethnicity and migration” (503-4).

2.1.2.1. The Depiction of Social Class in Contemporary British

Literature

In terms of class depiction, British literature from the 1950s was characterized, similarly to Edwardian England, by the fact that “attention was directed to working class culture” (Day 180). Nick Bentley claims, that in the late 1950s “a number of writers emerged whose fiction was interested in revealing the lived experiences, outlooks, culture and ambitions of what they understood to be a distinct working class in Britain” (45-6). One of the authors depicting the working class was, for instance, Allan Sillitoe whose *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1951) focuses on the relationship of an individual to their class. In this case, it is a working-class man, Arthur, who tries to escape and fight against his working-class background but in the

end, submits to it (Day 185). Bentley lists other writers of the 1950s that focused on the depiction of the working class, for example, John Braine and his *Room at the Top* (1957), David Storey's *The Sporting Life* (1960) or Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoner's* (1956) (45). Bentley further explains that these authors "shifted the focus onto youth subcultures [that] emerged during this period as a way of representing the subaltern class that had previously not found much space in the novel, a form traditionally dominated by middle-class concerns" (45).

With the fall of communism in the Soviet Union in the 1990s, the "traditional class structures based on Marxist models were [...] becoming less relevant" (Bentley 46). According to Dominic Head, this led to "the waning of class-consciousness [which] has brought with it the demise of the working-class novel" (Head quoted in Bentley 46). As a result, the focus on the working class in literature shifted to the underclass. As an earlier example of a novel focusing on the emerging underclass, Day mentions *A Kestrel for a Knave* (1968) by Barry Hines whose main protagonist differs from a working-class character in his poverty and "can be seen as a symbol of all those on the outside of affluent society" (Day 186-7). Another author focusing on the underclass is, for example, Irvine Welsh whose *Trainspotting* (1993) depicts "the alienation that the members of the underclass feel in relation to mainstream society" as the main character chooses drugs instead of the mainstream life (Day 188).

In the late 20th century and 21st century the themes of literature included "cultural issues of race, gender and sexuality rather than the economics of class" (Day 201). Bentley agrees as he states that

new critical paradigms, especially feminism, LGBT fiction, post colonialism, the categorization of 'black' and Asian British fiction, the neo-historical novel, trauma narratives, and fiction that has focused on youth subcultures have in fact

drawn attention away from what could be described as a continued desire amongst British novelists to explore, examine and represent working-class (47).

Regardless, he claims that there are writers of working-class fiction among contemporary British authors, for example, Martin Amis whose *Lionel Asbo* (2012) depicts a working-class man as “the eponymous petty criminal [...] whose main interests are drinking, pornography and maintaining his dogs in a state of heightened viciousness” (Bentley 48). Bentley goes on to name several other contemporary British authors who depict the working class in their fiction, for example, Monica Ali, Andrea Levi, James Kelman, Irvine Welsh or Zadie Smith (47).

2.1.3. Social class in the works of E.M. Forster and Zadie Smith

In terms of social class, E.M. Forster himself belonged to the middle class and it was the upper middle class which he often depicted in his work. Paul Peppis describes a typical Forster novel as a “critique of suburban middle-class Englishness” (49). In his novels, Forster typically presents a conventional English middle class character who is confronted with a different, open-minded view on life, usually in the form of a working-class or foreign character who challenges the rigidity of their own beliefs (Peppis 49).

Forster therefore may be said to be critical of the middle class in his works. He often puts two different sensibilities into contrast, either within the middle class itself or between the middle class and the lower classes. The two aspects of the middle class that Forster contrasts are snobbishness and narrow-mindedness, and liberalism and intellectualism. According to Avtar Singh, Forster associates these aspects of the middle class with places in his earlier novels, Sawston for the former and the Cambridge University or Italy for the latter (121).

This description is true for his “Italian novels”, *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905) and *A Room with a View* (1908) as well as his second published novel *The Longest Journey* (1907). *The Longest Journey* is a coming-of-age novel that follows the protagonist Rickie Elliot as he leaves the comfortable liberal Cambridge for hypocritical and close-minded Sawston, therefore, exemplifying the two aspects of the English upper middle class (Peppis 52). Similarly to *The Longest Journey*, in the Italian novels, Forster also satirizes the selfishness and narrow-mindedness of the English and puts it in contrast with the Italian character (Stevenson 210). In *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, the main character Lilia, a recently widowed woman, attempts “to escape from the repressive and close-minded society of suburban Sawston, epitomised by her in-laws” (Peppis 49). In *Room with a View*, Forster also “conveys the stuffiness of upper-middle-class Edwardian society, with its rigid codes of behaviour” (Forward). The story follows an upper-middle-class Lucy Honeychurch visiting Italy where she becomes attracted to a lower-class George Emerson. Back in England, she becomes engaged to an affluent man Cecil Vyse whom she does not love. In the end, Lucy manages to resist the rigidity of English society by marrying the lower-class George (Ardis 69). Even in his last novel, *A Passage to India*, “[social class] remained crucial to [Forster] as a central subject of his fiction” (Stevenson 220). In this novel, he also condemns the middle-class members for their “arrogance and insensitivity [that] is fuelling the British imperialism” (Peppis 51).

Class is a prevalent theme in Zadie Smith’s works as well given that she is earlier listed as one of the contemporary British authors of the working-class novel (Bentley 47). Zadie Smith first drew attention to herself with her debut novel *White Teeth* published in the year 2000 which was perceived as “a celebration of multicultural Britain” (Bentley 54). Multiculturalism is a theme often used in Smith’s novels along

with “family, community, and possibilities (and impossibilities) of belonging [or] the comic possibilities of everyday realism” (Tew quoted in Bentley 54-5). In regard to the theme of class, Smith frequently focuses on the working class in her novels. In her debut *White Teeth*, the two main families that the story follows, the Joneses and the Iqbals, are united by the same working-class background. The middle-class family, the Chalfens, is presented as “the other in class terms, reversing perhaps the dominant trend in the English novel to place normative values in the middle class, working characters most usually providing the source for either local colour or criminal contamination” (Bentley 55). In her fourth novel *NW* (2012), Smith also depicts the working class. The story follows a number of characters living in public housing in West London and according to Bentley she aims to offer a depiction of the essence and individuality of these characters who are living on the margins of society (56). In her latest novel, *Swing Time* (2016), Smith returns to North London and follows two young mixed-raced girls with a working-class background growing up in council estates. And even though they are linked by their similar social background and their shared passion for dance, “subtle class and racial nuances separate them” (Jilani) as the narrator of the novel ends up going to college and becomes an assistant to a pop star while her friend never manages to leave the working-class background she grew up in. By writing characters with a working-class background and exploring the influence their social standing has on their life, Smith’s works fit the earlier mentioned description of the working-class novel as a way of “revealing the lived experiences, outlooks, culture and ambitions” of the class.

Class remains a dominant theme in her third novel *On Beauty* as well. However, in contrast to the above-mentioned works, *On Beauty* focuses on middle-class characters rather than the working class. In this novel, Zadie Smith is, in her own fashion, funny and emphatic in her narrative while tackling themes such as race, faith or

the previously mentioned class. Frank Rich compares the novel to Smith's debut *White Teeth*, as similarly to *White Teeth*, in *On Beauty* "we have a baggy, garrulous account of two contrasting, haplessly interconnected families in an urban setting teeming with ethnic, racial and economic diversity". James Lasdun calls the novel "hugely impressive" because Smith manages to "[find] a style at once flexible enough to give voice to the multitude of different worlds it contains, and sturdy enough to keep the narrative from disintegrating into a babel of incompatible registers". Stephanie Merritt considers the book "wonderfully funny [...] from the perfectly nuanced dialogue of young black men to the refined aesthetic wranglings of art historians, Smith displays a remarkable talent for embracing all the possibilities of language" and continues saying that "*On Beauty* confirms Smith as an outstanding novelist". However, what is evident from the novel and what every reviewer mentions are the similarities which *On Beauty* shares with E.M. Forster's novel *Howards End*.

Both of the novels revolve around two upper middle-class families with conflicting worldviews. In *Howards End*, the protagonists are the Schlegels. The Schlegel family consists of three German-English siblings, Margaret, Helen, and Tibby. The Schlegels have an academic and liberal background and are concerned with social problems such as women's rights and the betterment of the conditions of the poor. They are contrasted by the Wilcoxes, a conservative and wealthy family, represented by Mr and Mrs Wilcox and their adult children, Charles, Evie and Paul. Their counterparts in *On Beauty* are found in the liberal Belseys and the conservative Kippses. The Belsey family consists of Howard, an Englishman, professor at the University of Wellington and a Rembrandt scholar, his wife Kiki, an African-American woman from Florida, who works as a hospital administrative, and their three children Jerome, Zora and Levi. Members of the Kipps family are Sir Monty Kipps, a Caribbean-born professor of Art

and similarly to Howard, a scholar of Rembrandt, his wife Carlene and their two children Victoria and Michael.

Despite the upper middle class being the central focus of both of the books, the working class is also represented. Both, the Schlegels and the Belseys encounter and befriend members of the working class. Leonard Bast from *Howards End* is a poor clerk stuck in an unhappy marriage. His counterpart in *On Beauty*, Carl Thomas, is a young African-American poet and a rapper with little formal education. In contrast to *Howards End*, Zadie Smith also expands her depiction of the social stratification for the underclass represented primarily by characters of Haitian immigrants.

Lionel Trilling considers *Howards End* to be a “story of the class war [but] not between the classes but within a single class, the middle class” (188). Class can therefore be considered one of the main themes of the novel and since Zadie Smith takes inspiration from *Howards End* and places her characters in the same social positions as E.M. Forster, the same can be said about *On Beauty*. Class is therefore a dominant theme in both of the books.

2.2. Intertextuality

The above chapters mention the noticeable influence of E.M. Forster's *Howards End* on Zadie Smith's *On Beauty*. In literary terms, an evident influence of previous texts on another text is called intertextuality. Intertextuality is, to put it simply, an influence, inspiration or a reference to existent works of art in another literary work. However, according to literary theorist Graham Allen, intertextuality is “not a transparent term and [...] is in danger of meaning nothing more than whatever each particular critic wishes it to mean” (2). In an attempt to offer a cohesive definition of intertextuality, this chapter will provide a brief overview of the most significant theories regarding intertextuality drawing mainly from Allen Graham's monograph *Intertextuality* (2000). Subsequently, the chapter will provide a description of intertextuality as a literary device with an emphasis on the use of pastiche.

As for the origin of intertextuality, Mevlüde Zengin claims that “the phenomenon itself dates back, in practice, to antiquity when the first recorded human history and the discourses about texts began to exist” (300). However, Allen places the actual origin of intertextuality in connection to the emergence of modern linguistics and therefore to the concept of linguistic sign as formulated by Ferdinand de Saussure (8).

In his series of lectures entitled *Course in General Linguistics* (1915), Swiss linguist and one of the founding fathers of structural linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure concerns himself with the linguistic sign. He views the linguistic sign as a unity of two elements, “the concept and the sound-image” (Saussure 66). In doing so, he establishes language as non-referential because a certain word or a *sound-image* does not refer to a particular object in the extra-linguistic reality but rather to the *concept* of such an object. This means that language is arbitrary and signs possess meaning “not because of a referential function but because of their function within a linguistic system as it exists at

any one moment of time". (Allen 9). Ferdinand de Saussure was not a theorist of intertextuality, in fact, the term intertextuality did not yet exist. Regardless, his notion of language as a closed system can also be applied to the literary field. Because similarly to a speaker choosing words from a pre-existing linguistic system, authors "select plots, generic features, aspects of character, images, ways of narrating, even phrases and sentences from previous literary texts and from the literary tradition" (Allen 11). In this view, all texts are inherently intertextual because authors are always choosing certain elements from the pre-existing body of literature.

Russian theorist Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin introduced an approach to language different to Saussure's. For Bakhtin, Saussure's understanding of language "loses sight of social specificity" (Allen 18) as Bakhtin emphasizes historical and social circumstances in which the language is used. This approach to language, linked with the social context, is connected with his notion of *dialogism* which is particularly important in regard to intertextuality. In his essay "Discourse in the Novel" (1934-35), Bakhtin claims that

the living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of an utterance, it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue. After all, the utterance arises out of this dialogue as a continuation of it and as a rejoinder to it (Bakhtin 276-7).

From the quote, the link between intertextuality and *dialogism* could be explained by considering every new work of literature as kind of a response to the previous, already existing works of literature and essentially being in a dialogue with them.

In the 1960s, the term *intertextuality* was first introduced in the essay “Word, Dialogue and Novel” (1966) published by French-Bulgarian linguist Julia Kristeva. Kristeva defines intertextuality as “a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another” (37). In other words, according to Kristeva, every text is intertextual as every text is inevitably inspired by previously written texts.

Intertextuality explained in connection to plurality was introduced by Roland Barthes. In Barthes’s theory, plurality does not necessarily mean the “ambiguity of [the] contents [of the text]” but rather the “plurality of signifiers that weave it” (Barthes 60). In other words, the text is plural not only because of having several different meanings but also because it is created from a number of pre-existing texts or, in Barthes’s words, *intertexts*.

The last author that will be mentioned in relation to the development of intertextuality is Harold Bloom. According to Allen, Bloom's understanding of literature is intertextual because “[literature] can only imitate previous texts” (134). Authors “employ the central figures of previous poetry [or literature in general] but they transform, redirect, reinterpret those already written figures” (Allen 135). Bloom is concerned with the motivation of an author behind their work which is according to Allen “conflictual” (134). On the one hand, authors want to imitate previous authors who shaped their understanding of literature but on the other hand, they also want to be original in their writing. So, despite the reconstructing and reinterpreting of previous texts in the pursuit of originality, every text remains intertextual.

What can be gathered from the overview of the theories of intertextuality is that intertextuality is an integral part of any piece of literature “since every artistic object is so clearly assembled from bits and pieces of already existent art” (Allen 5). However, there are certain literary devices which make direct use of intertextuality, such as

allusion, parody or pastiche. For the purposes of this paper, the chapter will focus primarily on pastiche.

According to Ingeborg Hoesterey, the term *pastiche* originates from the Italian *pasticcio* and later the French *pastiche*. The Italian term referred to a “highly imitative painting which synthesized the styles of major artists, apparently often with fraudulent intentions” (1). The French literary pastiche underwent a shift in meaning as pastiche began to be understood as an homage to the work it is imitating (Hoesterey 80). Pastiche is therefore a form of imitation and as such is often explained in contrast to parody. The principal difference between the two terms lies in their intention because parody is “a mocking imitation of the style of a literary work or works, ridiculing the stylistic habits of an author or school by exaggerated mimicry” (Baldick quoted in Allen 216). Some examples of parody include Henry Fielding’s *Shamela* (1741), a parody of Samuel Richardson’s novel *Pamela* (1740) or certain sonnets by William Shakespeare such as Sonnet 130 which is parodying the Petrarchan love sonnets of Shakespeare’s contemporaries. In comparison, pastiche uses “imitation as a form of flattery rather than mockery” (Baldick, quoted in Allen, 216).

In using pastiche, authors either mimic the style of several different authors or texts or they imitate one particular piece of literature (Literary devices). An often-quoted example of the former is *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* (1969) by John Fowles. The story of the novel is set in the second half of the 19th century in England and it reads like a Victorian novel. To achieve the similarity, Fowles does not mimic one particular author of the Victorian England but instead, imitates the style in which Victorian novels were generally written. However, it is not a Victorian novel as Fowles extends his narrative to include what was often overlooked in Victorian literature and that is the improper side of Victorian life. An example of the latter can be considered

Zadie Smith's *On Beauty* as she bases her story on one particular book, E.M. Forster's *Howards End*. The interpretation of *On Beauty* as a pastiche of *Howards End* will be provided in the next chapter.

3. Practical Part

3.1. *On Beauty* as a Pastiche of *Howards End*

It has been reiterated several times throughout the paper that Zadie Smith is paying homage to E.M. Forster with her novel *On Beauty*. The aim of this chapter is to analyse *On Beauty* in relation to *Howards End* drawing from the notion of intertextuality and pastiche outlined in the previous chapters. A focus will be placed mainly on the plot points in which the two stories meet and on the characters that can be viewed as counterparts to each other.

On Beauty opens with the line “One may as well begin with Jerome’s emails to his father” (3). The fact that the book is inspired by *Howards End* is therefore established from the very beginning as *Howards End* famously begins with “One may as well begin with Helen’s letters to her sister” (1). Smith updates letters to emails and the familial relationship is different, yet the similarity is not negligible. A parallel between the two novels observable from the beginning can also be found in its narration as both books employ omniscient third person narrator who does not seem entirely objective and is rather humorous in tone.

Apart from the usage of an essentially identical opening line, *On Beauty* relies on several analogous storylines and plot points to move the plot. First one of which is the way in which the two middle-class families become intertwined and that is by means of a short-lived engagement, in *Howards End* Helen and Paul’s and in *On Beauty* it is Jerome and Victoria’s. A very important event in *Howards End* is the unlikely friendship between Margaret and Mrs Wilcox which eventually leads to Mrs Wilcox bequeathing Margaret her beloved country house Howards End. Smith borrows this plot point, and a similar friendship develops between Kiki and Mrs Kipps. Both of the

friendships are surrounded by similar events including the shopping for presents, the invitation of the younger woman to stay with the older woman in their other house in the country, the pragmatic refusal from Margaret and Kiki, followed by the spontaneous acceptance. Mrs Kipps also bequeaths a valuable object to Kiki, in this case, a painting. After the death of Mrs Wilcox and Mrs Kipps, in both novels, the families of the deceased do not respect their wish as they feel entitled to the valuable object and conceal the bequest from Margaret and Kiki.

The characters representing the working class also enter the plot in a similar way. Both, the Schlegels and the Belseys encounter the person at a concert of classical music and both meetings are initiated by a member of the middle-class family accidentally taking something from the lower-class character. At a Beethoven concert, Helen accidentally takes the umbrella of Leonard Bast while almost a hundred years later, at a Mozart concert, Zora takes a disc man belonging to Carl Thomas. Both Leonard and Carl have to catch up with the family to reclaim their possession and thus become acquainted with them.

The two characters that seem the closest to each other are Mrs Wilcox and Mrs Kipps. Both women have a calming quality about them and personality-wise they do not seem to quite belong with the rest of their families. Mrs Wilcox and Mrs Kipps share a spiritual aspect of their personality which is not observable in the other members of their families. Yet, both of the women are devoted to their husbands and children. Even though neither woman shares common interests with Margaret or Kiki, both women manage to start a friendship with them despite the antagonism between their respective families.

Leonard and Carl also seem to be clear counterparts of each other. They share their working-class background and little to no formal education. Yet, they are both

interested in culture and they crave education but in the end, neither character manages to escape their social conditions. Both of the characters are also removed from the story quite abruptly and unjustly (Driscoll 62).

There are other characters in *On Beauty* that share comparable qualities to characters in *Howards End*. Readers can, for example, observe traces of Margaret in Kiki, especially in her confidence, selflessness and individuality. Mr Wilcox can be glimpsed through Mr Kipps, in his hypocrisy or his feeling of superiority towards the lower classes. Mr Wilcox's eldest son Charles finds his counterpart in Michael, Mr Kipps' son. Both men walk in the steps of their fathers and share similar ideals. And Zora follows the example of Helen in her attempts to help Carl in relation to education, similarly to Helen helping Leonard.

Zadie Smith has explicitly acknowledged in the forward of *On Beauty* that she is paying homage to *Howards End* with this book. Because of that, there can be no doubt that *On Beauty* is a pastiche of Forster's novel rather than a parody. Smith is taking inspiration from Forster in regards to the main storyline - the relationship between two conflicting ideals. However, *On Beauty* is by no means merely an imitation of *Howards End* because, despite the shared main plot and non-negligible similarities between characters, Zadie Smith adds many of her own ideas onto Forster's original story. Not only does she update it to her contemporary time, she also adds new themes such as race, academic privilege, marital issues or physical beauty and with it the issues of body image. With the addition of new themes, Smith makes the relationships in her novel more complex and also allows the readers insight into the minds of more characters than Forster and therefore significantly expands her scope of interest.

3.2. The Representation of Upper Middle Class in *Howards*

End and On Beauty

The main focus of both *On Beauty* and *Howards End* is the upper middle class. For Forster, the middle class is the class which he depicted most often in his novels. Smith generally emphasizes the working class, however, in this novel she also places focus on the middle class. Both storylines revolve around two families of the upper middle-class standing. However, despite the similar position within the social hierarchy, the two families are vastly different. The aim of this chapter is to analyse the approach to depicting the upper middle class by Forster and Smith while taking into account the findings outlined in the theoretical part in regard to the upper class and the middle class. Further, a focus will be placed on the differences between the two protagonist families in terms of their political views and ideals. However, the similarities between the two families will also be considered as they are not as dissimilar as they first appear.

3.2.1. *Howards End*

In *Howards End*, the two families in question are the Wilcoxes and the Schlegels. The Schlegels are of English-German heritage and they were brought up to be liberal-thinking and intellectual, and they take interest in equality of the classes and in women's rights. In Forster's words, "temperance, tolerance, and sexual equality were intelligible cries to them" (27). The Wilcoxes, on the other hand, seem like the exact opposite. They are an affluent, conservative-thinking family representing the materialistic and pragmatic upper classes.

As mentioned earlier, the Schlegel siblings include Margaret, 29, Helen, 21 and 16 years old Tibby. They live in Wickham Place in London and they have a yearly income of six hundred pounds each sibling which makes for a comfortable life. Margaret, as the eldest sibling, comes across as the most mature of the three siblings as opposed to Helen who “resembled her sister [in character] but she was pretty and so apt to have a more amusing time” (Forster 29). When the sisters are invited to stay with the Wilcoxes at Howards End, Margaret is the one who stays in London with Tibby who is suffering from hay fever while Helen visits Howards End and gets engaged on a whim there. Margaret is also the one, who takes care of Leonard when his umbrella is inadvertently stolen by Helen. Margaret is the most practical sibling, being able to put the differences between her family and the Wilcoxes aside to first become friends with Mrs Wilcox and later to marry Mr Wilcox while Helen essentially runs away when the Wilcoxes move to London, so that she does not have to meet them again. Even though the Schlegel sisters are both rather idealistic in their views, there are considerable differences between them. Margaret comes across as responsible and practical, in comparison, Helen is more reckless as she does not seem to take the consequences of her actions into consideration. However, they share the liberal outlook typical of the open-minded and intellectual English upper and middle classes.

In contrast to the idealistic Schlegels, Forster introduces the Wilcoxes and the notable differences between the two families are essentially the first thing the reader is made aware of through Helen’s letters to her sister:

the fun of it is that [the Wilcoxes] think me a noodle, and say so—at least, Mr. Wilcox does [...]. He says the most horrid things about woman's suffrage so nicely, and when I said I believed in equality he just folded his arms and gave me such a setting down as I've never had. Meg, shall we ever learn to talk less? I

never felt so ashamed of myself in my life. I couldn't point to a time when men had been equal, nor even to a time when the wish to be equal had made them happier in other ways. I couldn't say a word (Forster 3).

The Wilcoxes have vastly different beliefs from the Schlegels. The patriarch of the family, Mr Wilcox, earns his living by running the Imperial and West African Rubber Company and he is a very successful businessmen while the Schlegels rely on their inheritance. Mr Wilcox does not believe in gender equality and he treats lower classes as inferior to him while Margaret and Helen concern themselves with political equality both in terms of gender and in terms of social stratification. Mrs Wilcox fulfils the traditional gender role of a woman at the time, being a wife and a mother, and so does their daughter Evie who also gets married despite being from an educated and wealthy class. Neither Margaret nor Helen follows this route established for women at the time. Margaret is 29 years old at the beginning of the story and even though she does have suitors, she is still unmarried which was deemed unusual for a woman at the time, although as mentioned in the theoretical part, it was gradually becoming possible for women from wealthy families to opt for education and earning their living instead of getting married. And because the Schlegels did have a yearly income to rely on, this is the path that Margaret initially chooses for herself.

The friendship between Margaret and Ruth Wilcox also demonstrates the disparities between the two families' worldviews. Despite the relationship between the two women being overall positive and understanding, their views differ in many ways. That becomes evident during lunch at Wickham Place that Mrs Wilcox attends. "The little luncheon-party that [Margaret] gave in Mrs. Wilcox's honour was not a success. The new friend did not blend with the "one or two delightful people" who had been asked to meet her, and the atmosphere was one of polite bewilderment" (Forster 78).

Mrs Wilcox's views influenced by her husband are too different from the liberal company of the Schlegels, exemplified by the awkwardness elicited by Mrs Wilcox's opinion that important decisions should be left to men, a completely different opinion from the Schlegel's who support the women's suffrage.

However, Ruth is not a typical representative of the materialistic aspect of the English upper classes as opposed to the rest of her family. This can be observed, for instance, in the fact that she decides to leave Howards End to Margaret without taking the damage it could cause to her own family's social position into consideration because as mentioned in the theoretical part, one's status was derived from the ownership of property and losing a property like Howards End could therefore affect the social status of the Wilcox family. She is strongly connected to the house and she is therefore looking for a "spiritual heir" (Trilling 122) who she finds in Margaret. However, the Wilcoxes view Ruth's note, in which she bequeaths Howards End to Margaret, as an impulsive act of an ill woman and dismiss it.

Further differences between the two families can be seemingly observed in the behaviour of the members of the middle class towards lower classes. Both Mr Wilcox and Charles, the eldest Wilcox son, believe that one's circumstances are the result of their own doing and therefore they treat the working class as inferior. This is evident, for example, when the reader first meets Charles. He is talking to a porter: "„Sign, must I? Why the—should I sign after all this bother? Not even got a pencil on you? Remember next time I report you to the station-master. My time's of value, though yours mayn't be" immediately switching to politeness "Extremely sorry, Mrs. Munt." (Forster 16) when talking to someone of the same social standing as him. In comparison, Margaret, in her own words "talk[s] the same way to everyone" (162).

Moreover, as the theoretical part mentions, some members of the educated classes took an interest in the conditions of the poor. Apparent from their interests and political views, the Schlegel sisters fit the description and this aspect of the middle class becomes evident through their relationship with Leonard Bast. After meeting Leonard at a concert, they become interested in him and want to help him. However, they do not know how. With their like-minded friends, they discuss means of helping him. Despite their belief in equality, a sense of superiority can be observed within the conversation. By discussing how to help him, they indisputably place themselves above him. The sense of superiority can be further observed in the way in which Margaret and Helen talk about Leonard and especially about his wife Jacky. Jacky visits Wickham Place when she is looking for Leonard and after she leaves, Helen amuses Margaret and Tibby by making fun of Jacky, describing her as having “a face like a silk-worm” (118). When talking about Jacky, Helen also uses words such as “a female” (Forster 117) or “the creature” (Forster 118) which suggests a feeling of superiority coming from Helen as she distances herself from Jacky. This seems notably out of character as it comes from a woman who claims to support women’s rights and suffrage.

Nevertheless, the Schlegel sisters try to help Leonard and they recommend him to leave his job as Mr Wilcox told them that the company Leonard works for is close to becoming bankrupt. Leonard heeds their advice but as a result ends up in a lower-paying job and essentially penniless. At first glance, there seems to be a considerable difference in the reaction of the perpetrators to the situation as Mr Wilcox simply remarks that “a clerk who clears out of any concern, good or bad, without securing a berth somewhere else first, is a fool, and I’ve no pity for him” (Forster 197). He has no sympathy for Leonard even though he inadvertently caused his downfall. In contrast, Helen acknowledges their responsibility for the matter and tries to rectify it.

However, here the two families become more similar rather than different. As the relationship between Margaret and Henry Wilcox progresses, Margaret starts to change in many of her views as she is “penetrating to the depths of his soul, and approving of what she [finds] there”. At the beginning of the story, Margaret is presented as an independent and feminist character, yet she becomes more easily influenced by Mr Wilcox as their relationship progresses. When she meets Jacky at Oniton, she finds Jacky “repellent” (Forster 240) and feels ashamed of her. Even after she finds out about the fact that Mr Wilcox had an affair with Jacky, she forgives him and turns her back on the Basts. Instead of trying to help them, she tries to get rid of them. She writes a letter to Helen stating that “The Basts are no good. [...] The Basts are not at all the type we should trouble about” (Forster 252). This behaviour seems entirely at odds with her beliefs outlined earlier in the chapter and is far closer to the Wilcoxes’ view of the lower classes.

Helen, despite her good intentions, is even guiltier in the eventual economical demise of the Basts. Taking her actions into considerations, it can be argued that she is directly to blame, more so than Margaret or even Mr Wilcox.

The expedition to Shropshire crippled the Basts permanently. Helen in her flight forgot to settle the hotel bill, and took their return tickets away with her; they had to pawn Jacky’s bangles to get home, and the smash came a few days afterwards. [...] He turned to his family, and degraded himself to a professional beggar. There was nothing else for him to do (Forster 334).

It is Helen’s reckless behaviour and interference that once again worsens the conditions of the Basts. It is true, that she sends Leonard five thousand pounds, which he is too proud to accept, however, she is not interested in their situation anymore and essentially leaves it in the past. Forster then contrasts the desperate situation of the Basts with

Helen's privilege: "When Helen looked back, she could philosophize, or she could look into the future and plan for the child" (333). The privileges that the Schlegel sisters enjoy as members of the upper middle class prevent them from truly understanding the conditions of the lower classes and despite their belief in political equality, they place themselves in a superior position.

3.2.2. *On Beauty*

Similarly to *Howards End*, in *On Beauty*, the story revolves around two families with similar upper middle-class social standing and completely different political views. However, Zadie Smith transposes her story to a college town near Boston and focuses on two families belonging to the professional class. The professional class is described earlier in the paper as a category of people that is distinct in its professionalism. As the patriarchs of both families, the Belseys and the Kippses, work as professors at a university, they reach the status of the upper middle class.

On Beauty follows the storyline of *Howards End* in that that it pits the liberal and the conservative values against each other. In this sense, the Belseys are the equivalent of the Schlegels while the Kippses are parallel to the Wilcoxes. The Besleys are a mixed-raced liberal-thinking, atheist family. Howard Belsey originally comes from a working-class background but manages to move upwards in the social hierarchy by means of academic education. His wife Kiki is "middle class in her own right but without [Howard's] academic education" (Merritt). Because of her lack of academic education and also because of her race, Kiki does not always feel in her own place as the family lives in a white, affluent university town and most of their friends are Howard's colleagues. In contrast, the Kippses are a Christian, conservative family

coming from an affluent black background. The Belseys and the Kipsses are first contrasted in terms of the relationships within the two families. The Belseys are quite divided, partly because of Howard's infidelity but also because each member of the family is dealing with their own issues. On the other hand, there are the Kippses who are presented as a very traditional family in terms of the gender roles that the members of the family fulfil. Monty Kipps is the breadwinner of the family and his wife Carlene is the devoted nurturing "mother figure" (Smith 35). Conversely, Kiki is depicted as an ambitious and independent woman and is even baffled by Carlene's complete devotion to her family, suggesting that there must have been other things that Carlene wanted to do in life.

The liberal and conservative values become more apparent, however, when Monty starts teaching at the University of Wellington in the same department as Howard. Howard is the head of the Affirmative Action Committee against which existence Monty argues, accusing Howard "of privileging liberal perspectives over conservative ones; of suppressing right-wing discussion and debate on campus" (Smith 156). In relation to this, Monty plans on presenting a series of lectures entitled "Taking the Liberal out of Liberal Arts" against which Howard opposes. The fact that Howard is the head of the Affirmative Action Committee shows that he cares about minority students and wants them to have equal opportunities to those of privileged students in terms of class membership. Monty, on the other hand, believes that the right to attend university should be earned and not given to anyone based on their social conditions, mirroring the approaches of the Schlegel sisters and Mr Wilcox.

In relation to the liberal and conservative values, one of the major differences between the Schlegels and the Wilcoxes in *Howards End* was the intellectualism and idealism found in the Schlegels contrasted with the materialism of the Wilcoxes. By

placing her story in an academic setting, Zadie Smith essentially omits the materialism of the Wilcoxes from her narrative and due to the profession of Howard and Monty, both families can be viewed as intellectual. What's more, due to the academic setting of *On Beauty*, it can be argued that the depiction of the middle class is reduced to focus mainly on the academia. There are characters, such as Carlene or Kiki, who are middle class but lack the formal education, however, the antagonism between the two families is presented most prominently through the relationship between Howard and Monty. This antagonistic relationship is also intensified by the discrepancy between the success of the two academics. Among the educated public, Monty is very successful, practically, a celebrity, thanks to his published works while Howard is virtually unknown and his own book remains unfinished. Considering the transposition of the clash between liberalism and conservatism to the academic background, the feud between the two men seems almost petty and is perceived as such, for example by Kiki. It may be said that this way, Smith is highlighting the similarities between the two families despite the perceived differences.

In addition, the actions of the characters, prove the two families far more similar rather than different. In the university environment, Howard is on the side of the disadvantaged students but outside the university, he holds prejudice in regard to lower classes as exemplified by his dismissal of Carl when he arrives at the party at Belseys'. The guests at the party are mainly Howard's colleagues from the university, therefore, other members of the professional class and as Carl does not fit in with such company, Howard sends him away, despite the fact that Carl was invited to the party, earlier by Kiki, and again later, by Levi. Zora, who seems to resemble Howard the closest out of the Belsey children, demonstrates same prejudice which is illustrated in her second meeting with Carl during which she, at first, feels unsafe. Monty's bias against the

lower classes is apparent from his opposition to the Affirmative Action but he further manifests the prejudice he holds when he accuses Carl of stealing a painting from his office without having any substantial evidence.

The sense of superiority of the upper classes over the lower classes also becomes evident in the interference of the educated classes in the betterment of the conditions of the lower classes. In *Howard End*, this aspect of the middle class is represented by the Schlegel sisters meddling into the life of Leonard Bast. In *On Beauty*, this can be observed in Claire Malcom's character and later chiefly in Zora's character. Claire, a poet and a professor at the university, values talent over anyone's status as a student and invites people from various social backgrounds to her poetry class even if they are not officially enrolled at the university, for example, Chantelle Williams, a receptionist or Carl Thomas, a lower-class rapper. Claire has to defend the inclusion of non-Wellington students in her class and because she is convinced that the conservative members of the Wellington college do not take her seriously because of her liberalism, she asks Zora Belsey to defend the class:

'I think it would be much more powerful if it was you speaking your own mind. I mean, what I'd really like to do is send Carl himself, but you know...' said Claire, sighing. 'Depressing as it is, the truth is these people won't respond to an appeal to their consciences in any language other than Wellington language. And you know Wellington language, Zora. You of all people. And I don't mean to get overly dramatic here, but when I think of Carl, I'm thinking of someone who doesn't have a voice and who needs someone like you, who has a very powerful voice, to speak for him (Smith 263).

The lower class is depicted here as not having a voice and therefore in order to be heard still needs the wealthy to speak for them. This clearly shows the inferior position of the

lower classes. Zora does take it upon herself to prove that Carl belongs to the poetry class and to the university, however, similarly to Helen, eventually becomes the reason why Carl leaves the university. Her intentions are derailed as she is attracted to Carl but her interest is unreciprocated. Zora eventually turns her back on Carl and even implicates him in a crime, she knows he did not commit.

Monty Kipps might be more obvious in his belief that lower classes are inferior to him, however, Howard and Zora seem to share this sense of superiority. In this aspect, the families are akin to the Schlegels and the Wilcoxes. It is mentioned in the theoretical part, that one's class membership significantly affects one's life experiences. This is clear in both of the novels because the characters' class membership makes them very similar even with their fundamentally different worldviews.

3.3. The Representation of Working Class in *Howards End* and *On Beauty*

Neither *Howards End* nor *On Beauty* puts emphasis on the working class in their narrative. In both books, the central focus is placed on the middle class. E.M. Forster even explicitly writes in his novel that “we are not concerned with the very poor” (46). Nevertheless, both books include figures which represent the working class. This chapter will discuss the depiction of the working class in these characters, namely the characters of Leonard Bast in *Howards End* and Carl Thomas in *On Beauty*.

3.3.1. *Howards End*

Leonard Bast is 20 years old at the beginning of the story and he is working at an insurance company as a poorly-paid clerk. He comes from a family with a history of working class professions and because of that, he never received an education. Yet, a quality that is very distinct about him is his desire to be educated and cultured. However, because of his financial situation, he can never fully devote himself to learning because “there had always been something to worry him [...] in the pursuit of beauty” (Forster 40). Leonard lives with, and later marries Jacky Bast, a former prostitute. Because of their relationship, he loses all ties with his family.

In relation to Leonard and his social standing, Forster uses the aforementioned metaphor of the abyss. In Forster’s words, Leonard “was not in the abyss, but he could see it, and at times people whom he knew had dropped in, and counted no more” (48). The Basts, therefore, do not live in complete poverty which is also demonstrated by the fact that Leonard makes enough money to use some of his income on cultural events such as the concert during which he makes the acquaintance with the Schlegels.

During the concert episode, the reader may observe the differences between the thinking of the rich and the poor and how relative the value of money can be. While going to Wickham Place to retrieve Leonard's "stolen" umbrella, Margaret carelessly makes conversation about music and art while all Leonard can think of is his umbrella, despite him being keen on making educated and cultured conversation and having the opportunity to. Further, he questions whether he should have even spent money on the concert while for the Schlegels it was "cheap at two shillings" (Forster 31).

The difference between the Schlegels and Leonard does not only exist in relation to their financial status but also becomes evident in terms of their education. Leonard is poorly-educated while the Schlegels are intellectual and academic. This difference is painfully obvious to Leonard as he is conscious of the inequality and wishes to be well-informed and to be able to converse with ease on any subject. Due to this gap in education, the Schlegels and Leonard "are prevented from forming a meaningful connection" (Howarth).

Later in the story, Leonard heeds the advice of the Schlegel sisters and leaves his job for a different, worse-paid position. This eventually leads to his downfall as he can no longer support himself and his wife. Here, Forster returns to the metaphor of the abyss.

Leonard was near the abyss, and at such moments men see clearly. "You don't know what you're talking about," he said. "I shall never get work now. If rich people fail at one profession, they can try another [...] if a man over twenty once loses his own particular job, it's all over with him. I have seen it happen to others. Their friends gave them money for a little, but in the end they fall over the edge (237).

Leonard losing his job illustrates the one fatal mistake which can plunge a member of the working class into destitution or figuratively, into the abyss. Losing his job is essentially the end of the world for him as he cannot simply move on onto his next endeavour, the way the members of the upper classes could. This difference is demonstrated, for example, in the character of Helen, because her pregnancy does not affect her life economically or in Mr Wilcox's character who does not suffer any repercussions for having an extra-marital affair. Such events would most likely be detrimental to the lives of the members of the working class. After leaving *Howards End* without any income or savings, Leonard has to beg his relatives for money, however, as he suggested in his speech, his fall into the abyss is inevitable and would certainly happen was it not for his premature death.

Despite Leonard's aspirations and attempts to enter the educated society he never manages to make a connection with the Schlegel sisters. He is alienated from them because of his social and financial status. However, the inability to connect is also reflected in the narration of the novel. In comparing the original and the revised manuscript of *Howards End*, Mary Pinkerton points out that the personal relationships between the characters in *Howards End* are "affirmed through the use of pronouns" (238). When describing Leonard Bast, Forster avoids using personal pronouns and instead uses descriptors such as "the boy", "the victim" or "the fellow" (Pinkerton 238). For the Schlegels, he is "an interesting creature, of whom they wanted to see more" (Forster 127). Jacky is described in a similar manner as "a female" (Forster 117) or "the creature" (Forster 118) as mentioned earlier. This way, the middle-class characters distance themselves from the working-class ones, and so does the narrator. As a result, Leonard is alienated from the upper class and can never reach it despite his aspirations.

This representation of the working-class characters makes for a detectable sense of irony in the narration. The condescending tone is noticeable, for example, in Leonard's attempt at imitation of the prose of John Ruskin when describing his flat which is, according to Alberto Carbajal, "comical [and] belittling" (39). Moreover, the ironical depiction of Leonard becomes especially clear in his death scene, for it is quite ironic for an aspiring intellectual to die under a pile of books. This could be interpreted as an evidence of the quote in the opening paragraph, in which Forster states that the poor are not of interest in this novel. Because of that, Leonard is treated with this sense of irony which the Schlegel sisters and the Wilcoxes are spared of.

3.3.2. *On Beauty*

Carl Thomas, like Leonard Bast, is a side character and as a result, very little of Carl's actual background is given in the story. He lives with his mother in Roxbury, he has little formal education and he is a talented rapper who makes his own music. An important quality which Carl shares with Leonard, apart from their similar social position is their yearning for education. Carl cannot afford to study at a university and therefore tries to educate himself through other means as he explains to Levi: "I get my culture where I can, you know – going to free shit like tonight, for example. Anything happening that's free in this city and might teach me something, I'm *there*" (Smith 76). Carl therefore has to rely on events with free entry. His desire to educate himself is also evident in his conversation with Zora when they meet again, in which he describes obtaining an education at a university as "the prize" (135). It is made abundantly clear that this is something that Carl longs for.

Unlike Leonard, Carl is allowed to satisfy this desire to some extent with the help of Claire Malcolm. When Claire sees him at The Bus Stop, a club where young artists perform their poetry, she recognizes his talent and invites him to join her poetry class at the Wellington College. In the previous chapter, it is stated that Claire invites people outside of the enrolled Wellington students into her class. Because of that and also due to his social background, Carl does not think that he fits in with the other students and contemplates leaving the class, even thinking that a prank is being played on him. Nevertheless, Carl does well in the class and even manages to get a job at the university working as an archivist at the Black Musical Library. It is clear that attending the class and working at the university has a very positive effect on him. This becomes apparent, for example, in comparing the way in which Carl speaks with the Belseys upon their first meeting after the concert, where he comes across as nervous, defensive and insecure, while later in the story when he meets Jerome again, Jerome “register[s] the pleasant change: this open, friendly demeanour, this almost Wellingtonian confidence” (Smith 410).

Zadie Smith makes her depiction of the working class more nuanced by the addition of the issue of race. Carl is African-American, the Belsey family is mixed-raced and the Kipsses are Caribbean-English. One could assume that this similarity could bring the families closer together despite their different social position. However, that is not the case. *On Beauty* still presents the same inability of the upper middle class to make a connection with the members of the working class. This is portrayed mainly in the relationship between Carl and Zora. In trying to help Carl, he becomes an object of interest for Zora, which he eventually realizes during a dispute he has with her: “I’m just some experiment for you to play with. You people aren’t even black anymore [...]”

you think you're too good for your own people [...] I need to be with *my people*" (Smith 418).

The divide between the classes still prevents Carl from entering the academic, intellectual society and he even distances himself from the upper classes and is written off from the story. Despite the fact that Carl's ending would probably not be considered a happy one, it is still considerably better than Leonard's ending. As Zadie Smith states, one of the major differences between Carl's and Leonard's situation is that "the free-fall from simply "working-class" to "economic and social oblivion"—is not quite as swift nor as absolute as it used to be. Leonard makes one mistake and is doomed. Carl would have many chances" (*A Conversation with Zadie Smith*). After Leonard's fatal mistake in *Howards End*, he is penniless and completely dependent on his family, while Carl can go back to his previous life and possibly try to climb the social ladder again.

Despite, neither Leonard nor Carl being the main characters, they both play an important role in their respective stories. Through the working-class characters, the authors are allowed to express the considerable differences between the classes and the inability to make a connection. Moreover, over the course of the stories, both characters manifest the restricting aspect of the working class as they are both held back from entering the educated classes by their social and financial status.

3.4. The Representation of the Underclass in *On Beauty*

The term underclass was not yet being used in the Edwardian England era as stated in the theoretical part. Because of that, the underclass is not explicitly depicted in *Howards End* and it is one of the aspects of social stratification which Zadie Smith uses to enrich her depiction of the social hierarchy in her novel. This chapter will therefore focus primarily on the novel *On Beauty* and its portrayal of the characters which could be viewed as the “underclass” (Giddens and Sutton 502).

Underclass refers to the members of society who basically live outside society. They are either unemployed or have unstable employment and most often, the underclass is linked with minority social groups. This is true for *On Beauty*, because the characters who can be understood as members of the underclass are portrayed as Haitian immigrants. Smith mentions several characters fitting this description throughout the story, for example, a taxi driver taking Howard to the airport, Monique, a cleaner working for the Belsey family, a man selling jewellery from whom Kiki buys a bracelet, but most noticeably, it is a group of men that Levi befriends and starts working with after he leaves his job at the music shop. It is a group of immigrants from Angola, Dominican Republic, Cuba and mostly Haiti who earn their living illegally by selling plagiarized CDs and DVDs, and “knock-off” purses. One of those men is Choo, a Haitian immigrant who worked as a teacher in Haiti but in the USA, he does not have stable employment and therefore has to make money illegally or by working as an underpaid waiter or cleaner.

Smith portrays the underclass as a vocal category of people who are fighting for the betterment of their social conditions. This can be observed for example in their performance at The Bus Stop in which they angrily rap about “America’s involvement

in Haiti” (Smith 228). Throughout the course of the story, there are also several mentions of protests in which the underclass characters fight for fair wages.

However, despite the addition of the underclass to the depiction of the social stratification, the underclass still seems underrepresented as the reader views the class only through the eyes of the other characters depicted in the novel, therefore, through the middle-class and working-class perspective. On the one hand, there is Levi, who educates himself on the Haitian community, sympathizes with them, and joins them in their protests. On the other hand, there are characters such as Howard, who seems to be indifferent or Carl, who even finds them annoying and loud when protests are going on while he is at work, even though he is much closer to them in terms of the social hierarchy. Monty essentially exploits the Haitian community as he was, according to Choo, “buying [works by Haitian artist] at extremely low prices in an opportunistic manner” (Carbajal). Somewhere in between is Kiki who, according to Alberto Fernandez Carbajal, “embod[ies] the tension [...] between race and class”. Her middle-class social position is at odds with her black identity and puts her into a superior position within the social hierarchy, in which she is uncomfortable. That is manifested, for example, by her discomfort when she meets Monique as she feels “nervous of what this black woman thought of another black woman paying her to clean” (Smith 11).

Even though there are no clear counterparts of the underclass characters in *Howards End*, the abyss that is used as a metaphor for poverty could be viewed as the underclass in today’s terminology. In that sense, towards the end of *Howards End*, the characters of Leonard and Jacky Bast could be viewed as members of the underclass. The underclass is therefore, to some extent, represented in both books. In both novels, however, the underclass characters, in the case of *Howards End* especially Jacky, are

not given a closure and are marginalized in favour of the other classes that are represented in the books.

4. Conclusion

The principal objective of this thesis was to compare and contrast the depiction of social class, namely the upper middle class, the working class, and the underclass, in the novels *Howards End* by E.M. Forster and *On Beauty* by Zadie Smith while taking into account the shifts and changes which Smith makes in her novel. Social class is a dominant theme shared by the two novels, however, that is not the only aspect linking the two novels. Because of that, the thesis also discussed other elements interconnecting *On Beauty* and *Howards End*.

The theoretical part provided an explanation of the concept of social class with regard to its definition and also the relationship between class and literature. However, primarily, it emphasized the social stratification in Edwardian England and contemporary USA and England in order to provide a description to which the depiction of social class in the novels was compared to. Further, the theoretical part introduced the works of E.M. Forster and Zadie Smith in terms of their use of the theme of class. To understand the similarities and possible differences between the two novels, the term of intertextuality was introduced via a brief overview of its development and light was shed on the use of the literary device of pastiche as it is argued in the thesis that *On Beauty* is a pastiche of *Howards End*.

The practical part opens with a chapter focusing on the parallels between the two novels. To prove that *On Beauty* is a pastiche of *Howards End*, the paper described several plot points of the novels that are virtually identical. Moreover, characters that are unmistakable counterparts of each other were identified, namely the characters of Mrs Wilcox and Mrs Kipps, and Leonard Bast and Carl Thomas. Similarities were also observed in the narrative perspective. However, it was concluded that Smith makes her

scope larger by the addition of new themes and more characters and the change of setting also made for a significant shift from *Howards End*.

In terms of social class, the practical part was divided into three main chapters emphasising successively the upper middle class, the working class and the underclass. The analysis of the upper middle class in *Howards End* was based principally on the contrasting values of liberalism and conservatism demonstrated by the Schlegels and the Wilcoxes. However, in comparing the two families, it became obvious that they are far more similar than they are different. The analysis suggested that belonging to a certain social class is more important in shaping one's life experiences than conflicting opinions.

In *On Beauty*, the story is set mainly in the USA at a college town Wellington. By transposing the story to an academic environment, Zadie Smith managed to imitate the rigid social stratification of the Edwardian England. However, in doing so, she also significantly reduced her depiction of the middle class because this way, she put emphasis only on the academic and intellectual middle class as opposed to *Howards End*, in which Forster aimed to depict the conflicting values associated with the middle class in general. Neither *Howards End* nor *On Beauty* is typical in its depiction of the middle class in the context of the literature depicting social stratification because during the Edwardian era as well as in the contemporary British literature, the focus is generally placed on the working class.

The differences between the middle class and the working class that were outlined in the previous chapter were further analysed in the third chapter of the practical part which focused on the characters of Leonard Bast and Carl Thomas. In depicting the working class, Forster intentionally marginalized the characters as evidenced by the use of personal pronouns based on Mary Pinkerton's analysis of the

revisions of the *Howards End* manuscripts. He further alienated the working-class characters from the middle class by using a condescending and ironic tone in describing them. In *On Beauty*, Smith depicts the working class with the addition of the issue of race. However, despite all the main characters originating from a black background, apart from Howard, the class division remained a deciding factor in the inability to create meaningful relationships across the social classes.

E.M. Forster's depiction of the working class is characteristic of the way the class was represented in literature during the Edwardian period. Through the Schlegels and the Wilcoxes, he represented the dual understanding of the working class by the middle class. The Schlegels understand the members of the working class as victims of their circumstances and social conditions. The conservative Wilcoxes perceive poverty as a result of one's own doing. Even outside of his characters, his depiction is typical of the Edwardian era because the working class was depicted mainly by middle class writers which E.M. Forster was and many authors also aimed to explore the working class via the metaphor of the abyss which Forster alludes to throughout the story. Zadie Smith's depiction of the working class in *On Beauty* is uncharacteristic in the context of her own work as well as in the context of contemporary British literature portraying working-class fiction. In general, the working-class characters and their understanding of their social conditions are the focal points of working-class novels. In contrast, Carl is primarily viewed and depicted from the perspective of the middle-class characters. Very similar treatment can be observed in the depiction of the underclass in *On Beauty* because Smith does add the representation of the underclass to the depiction of the social stratification, however, the underclass characters are marginalized throughout the story and are only perceived from the perspective of the middle-class or working-class characters.

Overall, both *Howards End* and *On Beauty* offer a depiction of the social stratification of their time period. The emphasis is placed on the middle class and because of that, the working-class and the underclass characters are marginalized by the middle-class characters as well as the narrators. Both novels also depict the restrictive nature of the social classes, as characters from various social positions are unable to form a relationship.

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